

Saw Mill River Audubon
June 3, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by William Kellner)
Meeting held at Senasqua Park, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Present (in **bold type**): **Erik Andersen, Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Mitchell Goldfarb**, Philip Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, **Suzanne Kavic, William Kellner, Valerie Lyle, Tom McEnerney, Michael Madias, Jr., Mark Magel**, Kara Mason, **Kenneth Novenstern, Steve Rappaport, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon**, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, **Jennifer Stern, Larry Trachtenberg, Kathleen Williamson**. Executive Director **Anne Swaim** and Office Manager **Barbara Daniel** were also present.

Absent: Phil, Rik, Kara, Richard, Jean

Meeting started at 7:02 PM.

President's Report—Erik Andersen

Erik, noting that a quorum was present, began the meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the board of directors meeting held on May 6, 2024 and as circulated. Motion by: Jennifer Stern. Seconded by: Valerie Lyle. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Erik called attention to the dates for future meetings of the board of directors listed at the bottom of tonight's meeting agenda. The next two meetings, scheduled for September 16 and October 21, will be held at the Croton Free Library. The last board meeting of the calendar year will be a Zoom gathering on Dec. 9. Board committees meet in November but there is no full board meeting that month.

SMRA's search for replacement auditors is continuing. Attention was called to the memorandum distributed to board members prior to tonight's meeting, outlining the differences between a traditional audit and an audit review. The memorandum, written by SMRA President Erik Andersen, Treasurer Lynn Salmon, and board member Tom McEnerney, was dated May 31, 2024. It points out that switching to audit reviews would result in significant savings when compared to the costs of traditional audits. New York State mandates for nonprofit audits allow for an audit review if annual revenues are under \$1,000,000, so SMRA easily qualifies for an audit review.

Motion: Starting with fiscal year 2023 and going forward, SMRA will direct its auditors to conduct an annual audit review. Motion by: Mitchell Goldfarb. Seconded by: Steve Rappaport. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Fundraising and Development Committee Report—Suzanne Kavic

[Reference Membership Report as of May 31, 2024.]

With the current 621 SMRA chapter member households and 442 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,063. Revenue from membership dues for chapter memberships so far in 2024 stands at \$4,148.

Finance Committee—Bill Kellner for Phil Heidelberger

As of June 1, 2024, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,405,165, a 1.0% (\$13,364) increase for the month of May and a 3.5% (\$47,111) increase above the January 1, 2024 balance of \$1,358,054. There have been no additions to and \$30,000 of withdrawals from the endowment so far during 2024. As of June 1, 2024, we are 19.4% (\$32,295) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted withdrawals in highly liquid assets such as checking, short-term CDs and money market funds.

Treasurer's Report—Lynn Salmon

Annual fund drive letters began going out in May, and we received over \$18,500 in annual fund donations during the month of May. Many people also renew their memberships during the fund drive, which has generated an additional \$2,000 in membership revenue for the month of May. Lynn deposited an additional \$6,300 fund drive receipts today.

There is little other revenue to report. We didn't sell any bird seed in May as the shed has been, for the most part, cleaned out.

Expenses are mostly as budgeted. Lynn previously noted high oil bills this winter contributing to the Pruyn House expenses (see minutes of the May 6 board meeting). And in May we paid \$3,570 to remove the large tree at Pinecliff Sanctuary. A second tree was removed as well. As expected, bulletin expenses have decreased since we "went green" and reduced printing and postage costs.

Yellowstone trip budget numbers are not yet final but are expected to be net positive.

Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth

Legislation that would ban the harvesting of horseshoe crabs in New York State is being considered in both houses of the state legislature. Although the legislative session is nearly over, Ken reported that his contacts in the legislature are quite positive that the bill will pass. Tom noted that SMRA sent an Audubon Issue Alert email on June 4 outlining how to contact legislature leaders to advocate for passage of the bill.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

Anne updated the board on the issue of the Pruyn Sanctuary neighbor who is being prosecuted by the Town of New Castle for various environmental law violations. SMRA's attorney, Perry Freedman, has filed a civil complaint against the neighbor for damage to SMRA's property. A ruling on the defendant's motion to dismiss SMRA's civil complaint is still pending; the date for oral arguments on this motion has been delayed.

SMRA will hire an arborist to estimate costs for mitigating damage to SMRA's property caused by the neighbor's illegal dumping of trees and other debris on SMRA sanctuary property. Larry said that healthy trees have significant value, with dollar amounts depending on the species. As many trees were illegally removed or damaged by dumping of trees and other debris, the damage assessment could be quite high.

The criminal trial in the Town Court is now scheduled to take place on June 11 but may be subject to further delay. Anne noted that if the neighbor in question is found guilty of criminal environmental law violations, the Town may use the fines recovered for damage remediation caused by the violations.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim

SMRA hosted students from P.S. 125, an elementary school in Harlem, for an outing to Rockefeller State Park Preserve as part of the New York State Connect Kids to Parks Program. These city kids had a great time experiencing the natural world. The school wants to have additional classes participate in the program with us next fall. We will also host students from the St. Marks Lutheran School (Yonkers) later this month and Ossining School District in the fall. Another example of our focus on environmental education will occur tomorrow when Anne and SMRA educator Cathy Hildenbrand will be "team teaching" students from the Roaring Brook School at the pond in Pinecliff Sanctuary.

SMRA board members have been invited to participate in the nighttime horseshoe crab census to be held on June 21 at the Jamaica Bay NWR. We are hiring a bus to take our group to the Jamaica Bay NWR Visitor Center. New Castle's Gedney Park is a possible meeting spot; confirmation to follow. It will be a short walk to the

censusing sites from the NWR Visitor Center. Please let Anne know if you (and one guest) would like to attend. Seats are still available on the bus. Those driving themselves will meet up with the rest of the group in the parking lot of the Jamaica Bay NWR visitor center.

Anne called on Cary, who urged board members to attend the annual Birding Tea, which will be held at her home in Croton-on-Hudson on June 15. In addition to being an important fund-raiser for SMRA, the tea is always a fun event for the birding community. Delicious treats will be served. Let Cary know by email if you're planning to come. So far, 40 people have signed up.

Cary added that efforts to attract Purple Martins to the new martin house at Croton Landing have paid off and martins are now nesting there. Anne noted that this is the third successful martin house along our stretch of the Hudson River. The others are at Croton Point Park and Rockwood Hall.

A Zoom planning meeting for 2024-2025 field trips and programs will be held in July.

The Pruyn Sanctuary feeder cam has been turned off until new seed is delivered in late August.

Bird Seed Sale—Tom McEnerney

We've had a successful seed sale year. The only unsold items are some safflower and thistle seed.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.

A second wildflower planting has taken place at the Brinton Brook Sanctuary meadow. Over the next few weeks, Michael will be planting the trees purchased from the NYS Saratoga Tree Nursery.

Pruyn Garden Update—Mark Magel

The gardens are doing well. We now have a dedicated group of experienced and new garden volunteers. We have finished planting annuals. Going forward, we'll be working in the meadow garden, which will be at peak bloom in August. Two oaks will be planted on the side of the meadow. We're also planning to plant an Amelanchier shrub in the middle of the meadow.

Newsletter—Jenni Stern

Production of the summer issue is in process. Fall issue deadline is August 1.

New Business—Erik Andersen

Erik asked if anyone had scrap lumber that could be used to create new signs for our sanctuaries. Kathleen noted that the next meeting of SMRA's nature book club will be on September 17, when we'll discuss John James Audubon: the Making of an American by Richard Rhodes. On September 25, Anne and Kathleen will give an encore presentation of "Poetry and Birds." This program, previously presented at the Chappaqua Library, will be hosted by the Scarsdale Women's Club.

Adjournment—Erik Andersen

Motion: Erik shall adjourn the meeting. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Larry Trachtenberg. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively). Erik adjourned the meeting at 7:33 PM.